



Australian Bureau of Statistics

1301.0 - Year Book Australia, 1967

ARCHIVED ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 25/01/1967

STANDARDISATION OF RAILWAY GAUGES

7. UNIFICATION OF GAUGE

The question of the unification of gauge in the several States has been under consideration for several years, and numerous conferences on the subject have been held from time to time between the several Railway Commissioners and between the Premiers of the States concerned. Reference to these conferences have been made in previous issues of the Year Book.

In July, 1920, a conference took place at Melbourne between the Commonwealth and State representatives of three Governments, and a decision was arrived at under which a committee, consisting of two experts from abroad and an Australian representative not connected with the railways, was to consider the whole question of gauge unification, and report to the various Governments concerned as to the best course to be adopted.

On 8th February, 1921, the Governor-General appointed a Royal Commission, consisting of two railway engineers - one civil and one mechanical - together with an independent commissioner to inquire into and report on the question of the unification of gauges. The Commission was constituted as follows : - Chairman, Mr. John James Garvan; (Civil Engineer, Mr. Rustat Blake; Mechanical Engineer, Mr. Frederick Methven Whyte; with Mr. E. Simms as Secretary.

The result of the Commission's work was a recommendation that the gauge of 4-ft. 8.5-in. be adopted as the standard for Australia; that no mechanical, third rail, or other device would meet the situation, and that uniformity could be secured by one means only, viz., by conversion of the gauges other than 4-ft. 8.5-in.

The matter was discussed at a Conference of the Prime Minister with the Premiers in Melbourne. November, 1921, when it was decided to adopt 4-ft. 8.5-in. as the standard gauge for Australia. At this Conference it was also resolved that the adoption of a uniform gauge is essential to the development and safety of the Commonwealth.

The scheme advocated by the Royal Commission as the first step will provide a standard 4-ft. 8.5-in. gauge railway between Brisbane and Fremantle, and the conversion of the whole of the broad-gauge lines of Victoria and South Australia, at an estimated cost of £21,600,000, spread over a period of approximately eight years.

The details of the estimate of £21,600,000 for providing a main trunk line between Fremantle and Brisbane, and converting the 5-ft. 3-in. gauge lines of Victoria and South Australia are as shewn in the following table, which also includes an estimate of the cost within each State and the Commonwealth Territory together with the quota from each State and the Commonwealth, in terms of the allocation of cost agreed upon:-

State	Alterations to existing railways and structures £	New Lines necessary £	Adjustments of Rolling Stock £	Total cost of work within the State £	Quota £
New South Wales	800,000	857,000	..	1,657,000	7,094,388
Victoria	5,246,000	..	3,078,000	8,324,000	4,939,349
Queensland	..	1,250,000	598,000	1,848,000	2,535,868
South Australia	1,706,000	1,646,000	1,322,000	4,674,000	1,632,292
Western Australia	1,260,000	3,120,000	650,000	5,030,000	1,078,103
Commonwealth	67,000	67,000	4,320,000
Total	9,012,000	6,873,000	5,715,000	21,600,000	21,600,000

The estimated cost of conversion of the whole of the lines in the States concerned is.
£57,200,000, made up as follows: -

- (a) Alterations to existing railways and structures . . £48.355,000
- (b) Construction of any new lines necessary . . £2,596,000
- (c) Adjustment of rolling stock £6,249,000

This estimate includes the 3-ft. 6-in, lines in isolated parts of Western Australia and the independent lines of Northern Queensland, those of South Australia on the Eyre Peninsula, and those Commonwealth Government lines running to Oodnadatta and from Darwin to Emungalan. All of these lines will probably be worked as at present for some considerable time. The cost of conversion of rolling stock at present in use is not included.

8. Rolling Stock Gauges. - Allied to the question of the gauges of the railways of Australia is that of the rolling stock gauges which are in use, the rolling stock gauge being the maximum transverse dimensions to which the rolling stock may be constructed. In the following table will be found particulars of the rolling stock gauges, together with maximum length and weights of vehicles, at present in use on the Government railways, State and Federal : -

**STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS. ROLLING STOCK GAUGES IN USE,
1921.PASSENGER ROLLING STOCK**

Railway.	Gauge of	Maximum Rolling Stock Gauge.			Maximum
	Truck	Width.	Height above Rail	Length over all	Tare
	ft. in.	ft. in.	Level ft. in.	ft. in.	t. c. q.
New South Wales	4 8.5	10 6	14 0	74 4.5	44 2 1
Victoria	5 3	10 0	14 2	74 1.25	47 16 0
"	2 6	7 0.25	10 4.25	31 8	8 11 0
Queensland	3 6	9 4	12 9	55 5	26 17 0
"	2 0	6 3.875	10 0	22 0	3 0 0
South Australia	5 3	10 4.25	14 1.75	74 1.25	40 11 0
"	3 6	9 4.375	12 1	62 6	24 18 0
Western Australia	3 6	8 10	12 7	61 9	31 10 0
Tasmania	3 6	9 6	12 5	64 0	30 0 0
"	2 0	6 6	10 0	30 2	5 10 1
Federal -					
Trans-Australian	4 8.5	10 6	14 6	78 11.5	48 0 0
Northern territory	3 6	9 4	12 9	39 0	12 0 0
Oodnadatta	3 6	10 2	12 4	39 0	12 0 0

GOODS ROLLING STOCK

Railway.	Gauge of	Maximum Rolling Stock		Gauge.	Maximum -	
	Track	Width	Height above Rail Level	Length over all	Tare.	Carrying Capacity
	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	t. c. q.	t. c. q.
New South Wales	4 8.5	9 8	13 6	60 11	20 10 3	40 0 0
Victoria	5 3	9 7.5	13 7.75	55 4.5	20 13 1	30 0 0
"	2 6	6 5.5	9 7.25	27 3.75	7 12 2.5	10 0 0
Queensland	3 6	8 9	12 0	45 5	14 16 0	21 8 0
"	2 0	6 6	9 0	22 0	4 10 0	16 0 0
South Australia	5 3	10 0.25	12 10.75	52 1	23 10 0	30 0 0
"	3 6	8 6	12 5.25	52 9	22 0 0	25 0 0
Western Australia	3 6	8 8	12 6	44 9	17 18 0	27 0 0
Tasmania	3 6	8 6	11 0	40 10	12 5 0	30 0 0
"	2 0	6 0	6 6	27 0	5 15 2	20 0 0
Federal -						
Trans-Australian	4 8.5	10 6	14 6	47 6.5	15 0 0	40 0 0
Northern Territory	3 6	9 4	12 9	34 6	9 10 0	12 0 0
Oodnadatta	3 6	10 2	12 4	18 0	5 0 0	12 0 0

In the above tables the transverse dimensions given are not necessarily those of one particular vehicle, but are the greatest employed on any vehicle.

This page last updated 17 June 2009

© Commonwealth of Australia

All data and other material produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) constitutes Commonwealth copyright administered by the ABS. The ABS reserves the right to set out the terms and conditions for the use of such material. Unless otherwise noted, all material on this website – except the ABS logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark – is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence